**MINUTES OF BOARD OF POLICE COMMISSIONERS MEETING MONDAY, APRIL 8, 2024 7:00 P.M. – TRAINING CLASSROOM, POLICE HEADQUARTERS**

Chrmn. Smith called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Sam Bergami, Alberta Jagoe, John Mager, Sharon Marrone, James Richetelli, David Rubenstein, Richard Smith

ALSO PRESENT: Police Chief Mello, Deputy Chief Rojee, Capt. DelMonte, Lt. Chila, Ald. Vetro, D. Candido, Secretary

A quorum was present to conduct the business of the meeting.

**CONSIDERATION OF APPOINTMENTS** – Chief Mello reported 12 officers were sworn in as they have completed their probationary period and are now regular officers which now gives the department 12 more officers in the field.

Further he reported Julie Johnson, retired Captain, New Haven Police Department, will be put on as Special Officer and will be working part time. Chief Mello explained she will require some additional training; however she knows the city well and in New Haven she was Director of their Academy making her helpful to our department in that area. As well, three officers have been brought on as they bring good experience and maturity to our department. He stated these three officers are retired from nearby cities.

Chief Mello explained the addition of these officers will supplement the officers we have and are able to take on jobs that our regular officers cannot take.

**CITIZENS COMMENTS**

* Ald. Vetro referred to a speaker at a recent aldermanic meeting who shared an incident he was involved in, specifically hitting a female who was crossing the street when exiting Dockside. The speaker explained the female was crossing Bridgeport Avenue and although he carefully looked at both sides of the street he did not see her. Ald. Vetro explained the man did not get a ticket and asked the aldermen of it was possible to have a crosswalk established in that area.

Chief Mello offered to speak to the individual regarding his concerns and explained since she walked out into the roadway the violation was on her part. He added Bridgeport Avenue is a state highway which would require Milford to make this recommendation to the state but he did not think they would agree with the recommendation.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES –** Comm. Mager and Comm. Marrone made and seconded a motion to approve the minutes of the previous meeting(s). Motion carried unanimously.

**CONSIDERATION OF CHIEF ON MATTERS OF ADMNIISTRATION**

1. Donation of two gift cards from Jim Berkovitch – Chief Mello explained the donor sent 2 thank you’s, one to the Chief and one to Officer Studdard in appreciation of the department and officer’s assistance and included two $200 gift cards. Chief Mello noted normally gift cards are gratefully accepted and put into the Police Wellness Fund. He recommended the gift card from Colonial Grill be placed into the Police Wellness Fund and the other card from Dick’s Sporting Goods be donated to Boys & Girls Club.

Comm. Mager and Comm. Rubenstein made and seconded a motion to place the $200 gift card from Colonial Grill donated by Jim Berkovitch in the Police Wellness Fund. Motion carried unanimously.

Comm. Mager and Comm. Marrone made and seconded a motion to place the $200 gift card from Dick’s Sporting Goods donated by Jim Berkovitch to Boys & Girls Club. Motion carried unanimously.

1. Chief’s General Comments – Chief Mello explained approximately two years ago the Department purchased Sig Sauer pistols which were not purchased through city funds. He stated there has been problems reported with accidental discharges noting with recent incidents in Orange and Lebanon, our department has lost confidence in these guns. He stated those guns have been replaced with 6 Smith & Wesson guns, again not using city funds. Chief Mello added our officers like the product but lost confidence in that particular gun.

Chief Mello stated the recruit classes are progressing and no recruits have left the class to date. He added this class will be finished with training by the end of the summer.

Chief Mello reported Capt. Alexopoulos will be retiring in July and on leave at this time. As well Officer Sopchak will start as Detective in our bureau on April 26th.

Chief Mello stated he shared his 2024-25 budget with the Board of Finance and stated this year’s budget had 1 additional officer requested as well 1 in next year’s budget as well as a Social Worker in next year’s budget. He added he will be presenting budget to the Board of Aldermen later this month.

Milford Police Department vs. West Haven Police Department Charity Hockey Game was held on March 23 and $4,600 was raised. He added he is grateful to the West Haven Department who allowed our team to keep the funds raised and those funds were donated to Boys & Girls Club.

**REPORT ON PLANNING AND ZONING REQUESTS** – none

**ACCEPTANCE OF REPORTS –**

Motion made by Vice Chair Bergami and seconded by Comm. Rubenstein to accept reports as presented.

a. Special Investigations Unit Report

b. Detective Bureau Report

c. Crime Prevention Unit Report

d. Traffic Division and Licensing Unit Report

Motion carried unanimously.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS - none**

**NEW BUSINESS – none**

**COMMENDATIONS** – Deputy Chief Rojee was pleased to report a Certificate of Commendation was presented to Officer Kevin Hilliard, one of the department’s K-9 officers, for incident which occurred on 12/8/2023 while on the midnight shift he responded to call on Housatonic Avenue regarding chase of vehicle subsequently found on Clark & Hill Street with 2 juveniles. Officer Hilliard positioned himself and deployed stop sticks. He explained the vehicle gets on to Washington Street at which time the two the in the car chose to flee the vehicle and Officer Hilliard and his K-9 pursued them. Deputy Chief Rojee explained one youth stopped immediately but the other continued to run unto the railroad track and during the pursuit this youth laid down on the track. At this point Officer controlled his K-9 and was able to get the other youth who was lying on the railroad track off the track before an oncoming train approached.

Chief Mello added Officer Hilliard’s K-9 recently had emergency surgery and this was the second K-9 that recently had emergency surgery. He stated officer Hilliard’s dog will be laid up for 1 month and the cost of surgery was $17,000 and one dog has passed away. Chief Mello stated a good deal of money is being spent on emergency care of our K-9.

Discussion ensued regarding the average service life of a K-9 and Chief Mello explained that varies but it could be between 5-10 years. He stated the department does not have a budget for this and if we are serious about maintaining a K-9 unit we will have to look at putting money aside for such emergencies adding there are surplus funds that could be transferred from other line items at this time.

Comm. Rubenstein added this is a valuable program and would not like to see our department get away from it.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Consideration of Report of Chief of Police on matters concerning the Appointment, Employment, Performance, Evaluation, Health or Dismissal of Department Employee

It was moved by Vice Chair Bergami and seconded by Comm. Mager to recess to Executive Session at 7:35 p.m. regarding the following:

1. Consideration of the performance of four (4) employees

Motion carried unanimously. (Commissioner’s present, Chief Mello, Deputy Chief Rojee, Capt. DelMonte remained for Executive Session).

Motion was made by Comm. Mager and seconded by Comm. Marrone to reconvene in public session at 7:59 p.m. Motion carried unanimously,

Being no further business to discuss, it was moved by Comm. Mager and seconded by Comm. Rubenstein to adjourn at 7:59 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Recorded by Diane Candido

Submitted to City Clerk: April 12, 2024